

Plastic bags, pet waste allowed in Ottawa green bins starting July 2

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By Beatrice Britneff Global News

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Starting on July 2, Ottawa residents can begin bagging their organic waste in plastic bags before tossing them in the green bin. The city is also allowing residents to dump pet waste in the bins.

Ottawa residents may begin dumping dog feces, cat litter and plastic bags filled with organic waste into their green bins starting on July 2, the city announced on Thursday.

The inclusion of plastic bags and pet waste in the municipal composting program has been in the works for months, after the last Ottawa city council approved the change in late March 2018.

The city hopes the change will incentivize more households to participate in the green bin program. Heavier use of green bins “will divert more organic materials from the landfill and significantly extend its life,” according to the municipality.

Last year the City of Ottawa commissioned a study on residents’ use of and attitudes towards the municipal composting program to figure out why some people aren’t taking to it.

According to the poll results made public Thursday, 77 per cent of respondents with curbside recycling collection said they use their green bin. Meanwhile, only 31 per cent of individuals living in multi-residential buildings said they had access to a green bin.

The smell, mess and “gross” factor of the green bins was cited as a top reason for why residents with curbside pickup weren’t using them more, or weren’t using them at all,

according to the phone survey, conducted by Hill+Knowlton Strategies in December 2018. For residents in multi-residential buildings, inconvenience is a major factor.

Nineteen per cent of all 2,032 residents polled said they “hate” using the green bins.

But just over 60 per cent of respondents said they were more likely to use the green bins after plastic bags and dog waste were permitted.

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The city says the organic waste facility it contracted has been retrofitted so that, upon arrival, plastic bags are ripped open and separated from the organic waste; the waste then gets composted and the bags go to the landfill, according to the city.

If they prefer, the city says residents can continue bagging their organics in paper bags, cereal boxes and milk cartons before tossing them in the green bin. Residents can also line their bins with newspaper, the city says.

The city is encouraging residents who opt for plastic bags to “reuse bags that may otherwise be thrown out, such as milk or bread bags.”

News of the July 2 rollout comes days after the federal Liberal government announced that it intends to ban “harmful” single-use plastics by “as early as 2021.”

“Our approach, including determining which products fall under the ban, will be grounded in scientific evidence and closely mirror the actions being taken by the European Union and like-minded countries,” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on June 10.

“Companies that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging will be responsible for the collection and recycling of their plastic waste.”